Notable Bookmakers.

ERHARDT RATDOLT.

He most ancient dated works issuing from the printing press, of which we have any knowledge, were the “Letters of Indulgence,” produced by Gutenberg at Mayence, and of which several editions were printed in 1454-55. The “Psalter” of Faust and Schaeffer, which appeared engraved in soft metal. These woodcut or metal engraved initial letters were distinct in design from any others we have seen, and they were clearly produced by one who took his inspirations from the scrolls and flourishes of the illuminator. The majority of the letters were no doubt intended to be filled in with colours, but the large capitals are boldly treated in a style similar to that which has been named in Italy the “sgraffito” or white on a black ground. From Augsburg, sometime before the year 1476,

three years later, is the first complete book having the date of its production—the year 1457—clearly indicated therein. This monument of the printer's art is no less remarkable for the beauty and elegance of its type than for the admirable woodcut initial letters with which it is enriched. These are of several sizes, mostly printed in two colours, and they have been declared by some of the best judges of typography to have been cut in soft metal, as in no other way is it possible to account for the extreme sharpness of the work and the exact matching of the duplicate blocks from which many of them must have been produced. Didot declares, however, in his treatise “De la gravure sur Bois,” that he has satisfied himself that the initials of the “Psalter” were executed in one printing by means of double blocks, inserted the one within the other, each of which admitted of being separately inked. Whatever may have been the process adopted in this masterpiece of typography, the practice of preparing similar woodcut initial letters to be printed with the text remained for many years afterwards in abeyance, and the early printers relied upon the aid of the scribes and the illuminators for the completion of their books. We can trace no further use of such woodcut capitals until Günther Zainer began, some ten years later, to print at Augsburg. He was the first to set up a press in that imperial city—in 1468—where, four years afterwards, he not only provided himself with a fount of roman characters, but he printed in 1472 the earliest work in Germany in which type of this kind is used. In the following year, he produced Comestor's “Historia Scholastica,” which teems with initials of various sizes, evidently printed at the same time as the text, and apparently

enlarged in soft metal. These woodcut or metal engraved initial letters were distinct in design from any others we have seen, and they were clearly produced by one who took his inspirations from the scrolls and flourishes of the illuminator. The majority of the letters were no doubt intended to be filled in with colours, but the large capitals are boldly treated in a style similar to that which has been named in Italy the “sgraffito” or white on a black ground. From Augsburg, sometime before the year 1476,

Vella opra da ogni parte e un libro doro.
Non fu più preciosa gemma mai
Dil kalendar ; che tratta cofe alia
Con gran facilita : ma gran lauro

Qui numero aureo : et tutta segni fuoro
Defensa del gran polo da ogni lai :
Quando ti foie : e luna eclipci fai :
Quante terre le rece a flo thevoro.
In un infinito tu lai qual bara fia :
Qual fara lanno : giorno : tempo : en me褥e :
Che tutti ponti non daffrologia .
Ioanne de monte tegno questo fexe :
Coglier tal frutto adio non graue fia
In breue tempo : e com pohi penexe .
Ebi teme total fexe
Scampa utru. I nomi di impressori
Son qui da basso di rossilcolo.

Venetiis. 1476.

Bernardus pictor de Auguffa
Petrus Iollen de Langencen
Erhardt ratoldt de Auguffa

Titlepage of Calendar of John of Königsberg.
Printed by Ratdolt. 1476.

Erhardt Ratdolt, the subject of our present memoir, travelled to Venice, having with him a companion and fellow townsman who figures in the colophons of many of the books they printed jointly as “Bernardus Pictor.” It has been suggested that Pictor was the Latinised form of the common German name “Maler” (Painter), and that he was not, as has been thought, thus named on account of his art proclivities. Indeed, some have attributed to Bernardus the beautiful
Erhardt, the son, continued to live for some years in the same place with his elder brother, Hans, but after 1474 his name disappears for twelve years from the roll of tax-payers, and we hear no more of him in Augs-
burg until 1486. This period is partially covered by his visit to Venice, though his first work in that city bears the date of 1476. It may be that, on leaving home, he went first to Nuremberg, and worked for a time at the private press of the famous astronomer, Müller, or John of Königsberg, also known as Regiomontanus, and with him departed for Italy in 1475. This, how-
ever, is a mere conjecture, founded on the fact that
Ratdolt produced so many of the works of that author, and began his career in Venice with the publication of his "Calendarius." This work, as already stated, is dated on the title-page 1476, and it appeared in that year both in Latin and also as an Italian translation. It is notable in many ways, chiefly, however, as being the first printed book provided with an ornamental title-page. It was also the earliest instance of the extensive use in Italy of woodcuts for initial letters.

Count Delaborde has pointed out that in the "Valerius Maximus" of Vindelin de Spira, printed at Venice in 1474, there is a woodcut capital on the recto of the third leaf. The fount of roman type at first used by
Ratdolt is a very beautiful one, and differs in so many particulars from that employed by his fellow-citizen
Zainer, that we think it was not from Augsburg that he derived his materials. The character of the fount distinctly resembles that of Jenson, and we have little hesitation in assigning the punches from which it was struck to the eminent French printer, who had made his home in Venice. In the elegance of the formation of the letters and the nice balance of the parts, we think the type of Ratdolt stands without a rival. We do not find in any account of his press any notice of the fact that not later than 1482 Ratdolt procured another fount of roman type, with which he printed the "Oratoriae Artis Epitoma." Like many of his brother-printers, he speedily procured some gothic type, and he issued, in 1480, an edition of the "Fasci-
culus Temporum" in gothic letter, which seems to have been the first book he printed with this kind of type. We have reproduced the title-page of the rare and curious Italian version of the calendar of John of Königsberg, or Montereoggio, which is printed in black and red. The border, which is formed of three rules, is carefully cut in outline, and it is interesting to notice that in the panel on the right the veins of the leaves have been omitted. The title-page of the Latin edition, which probably preceded the Italian translation, is identical in arrangement. The verses begin in the Latin, "Aureus hic liber est." The woodcut capitals, formed of branches bearing foliage and flowers, appear to have been designed specially for this work, and the singular blocks representing eclipses, printed in black and hand-coloured yellow, are the earliest instances of the use of astronomical diagrams of this kind. The calendar which Monteggio himself produced in Nuremberg in 1473, in German, was of a far ruder character, judging by the facsimile to be found in the work of Falkenstein. The book contains 32 pages; two pages in the middle of the
work following the diagram of eclipses, pp. 19 and 20, and again two at the end, pp. 31 and 32, are stuck together to form stiffeners for the “instrumenti”; the one for the calculation of the real motion of the moon, the other for a so-called “horizontal clock” on the one side, and on the reverse a protractor for the computation of solar time.

The next year, 1477, was a memorable one for the activity of Ratdolt and his companions, as in it they produced some of their finest works. These were the Roman History of Appianus Alexandrinus, translated by P. Candidus, arranged as two volumes in small folio. Each of these volumes is most sumptuously printed, having new woodcut letters of exquisite design and elaborate borders surrounding the title pages. Two smaller works also made their appearance in 1477, namely, the “History of P. Mocenicus” by C. Cepio, and the treatise “De Situ Orbis” by Pomponius Mela. These works have each of them the same beautiful woodcut border, composed of scroll work and foliage in white on a black ground. We reproduced this border in facsimile in our issue of December last, on page 23. The type is the same in all the volumes appearing in this year, and the headings of chapters are printed in red ink. The Pomponius Mela contains 48 pp. and the “History of Mocenicus” 54 pp., the first and last leaves of the latter being blanks. In the following year, Ratdolt reprinted the Pomponius Mela and he issued a little work by Franc. Mataratus, “De Compendenis Versibus Hexametro et Pentametro.” This book was dated, doubtless by an error, 1468, and this mistake has led some commentators to consider that the art of printing was practised in Venice before the advent of John de Spira, who had always been considered the first to print at Venice in 1469, in which year Cicero’s “Epistolae ad Familiares” was published. There is, moreover, in existence a privilege granted to the above-named printer to exercise his art at Venice, dated 1469.

Following the prevailing fashion among Venetian printers at this time, Ratdolt, as we have already stated, soon began to use the so-called “gothic” type, a more compressed character, which was first employed at Venice by Wendelin de Spira in 1472, and the first book printed wholly in gothic letter which bears Ratdolt’s imprint is the “Fasciculus Temporum” of 1480. This work had appeared in numerous editions previous to this date, but Ratdolt improved on all that had gone before and enriched the book with views of towns, in certain of which an attempt is made to give an approximately true picture of some of the places. Thus the view of Venice, which we have selected for reproduction, will readily be recognised, and the small and neat gothic letter is well shewn in our facsimile.

It is impossible in the limited space at our command to refer to more than a few of Ratdolt’s publications. In 1482 he produced the splendid edition of Euclid, which, for the first time, gave a complete set of diagrams for each of the problems. Some of these woodcuts are admirably engraved, and the entire work is a triumph of the printer’s art, considering the period at which it was produced. It is printed in gothic letter in two different sizes, and contains 138pp. In this same year Ratdolt printed an illustrated edition of the works of Hyginus, with 47 curious woodcuts of the constellations, and copies of the figures of the planets reproduced from the “Planetenbuch.” In 1482 also appeared, as we have seen, the first edition of the “Oratorium Artis Epitoma” of J. Publicius, with numerous most singular woodcuts. From time to time while he was in Venice he printed works in the German language; thus, in 1478, while still in partnership with Bernhart Maler, he printed, as already mentioned, a book by Montereggio, and in 1483 he issued the “Auslegung der X. Gebote,” the printer of which is named as “Meister Erhart Ratdolt von Augsburg zu Venedig.”

Ratdolt’s fame and reputation as a printer became widely circulated, and he was repeatedly invited to return home, but it was not until Count Friedrich of Hohenzollern succeeded to the Bishopric of Augsburg in 1486 that he was induced to come back to his native city in order to print the religious works for the
diocese of Augsburg. In February, 1487, he dates the colophon of the "Obsequiale Collectum" from Augsburg, and states that it was the first work printed by him in that city after his return from Venice.

For a period of twenty years he resided in the St. Katherine-street, and in the tax-book he is mentioned first as Erhardt Ratdolt, later as "Meister Erhardt Ratdolt," and occasionally with the adjunct of "Buchdrucker" (printer). In 1507 he removed to the Frawengraben, and there he remained until his death.

According to Zapf, the chronicler of the Augsburg press, the death of Ratdolt took place in 1516, but this is manifestly incorrect, as from references in the Gerichtsbuch to payments to him, and from various notices in the tax-books of Augsburg, it appears that he was still living in 1527. In the year 1528 the tax was, however, paid by Erhardt Ratdolt, i.e., the widow of Ratdolt, and his death must have, therefore, taken place during the course of that year. For a long time antecedent to his death he printed in partnership with his son, Jörg, who, under the name of Georgius Ratdolt, proved a puzzle to Zapf. Butsch tells us that he died a wealthy and a highly respected citizen, and that his widow paid what was at that time the considerable tax of 40 gulden. We have no knowledge of the age he had reached at his death, but as he printed for ten years at Venice, and lived nearly forty years after his return to his native city, he cannot have been less than seventy years old when he died. It is said that one to whom the art of printing is so greatly indebted should have left so few traces of his career beyond those to be gleaned from the masterpieces of his own press.

During the time he printed at Augsburg he adopted the handsome woodcut device we herewith reproduce in reduced facsimile, this was printed in black and red. Ratdolt was very expert in the use of coloured inks, and the dedication of the copy of his "Euclid" to the then Doge of Venice, which is now in the British Museum, is printed in gold; the first specimen of this use of the precious metal.—GILBERT R. REDGRAVE.

**Book-Plates.**

The taste for elegant and choice books is undoubtedly spreading, and just now there is quite a craze among book-lovers for the collection of those little labels which are placed in books as marks of possession, and are usually known as book-plates. New ones are every day being designed, and much artistic excellence is exhibited in the designs. Most possessors of books like to write their names within the covers, and some, going a little further, have their names printed on a ticket to place inside their books. Here we have the book-plate in its simplest form. Book-plates appear to have taken their rise in Germany, or at all events the earliest examples known to us are connected with that country, and with the great master, Albert Durer. Willibald Pirkheimer was a great friend of Luther and Melanchthon, and he possessed a goodly library filled with the works of the early reformers. In these books, many of them large folios, he placed his famous book-plates; one of these was a woodcut designed by Durer which contained Pirkheimer’s arms and those of his wife with much emblematical surroundings—the other was a copper-plate portrait of Pirkheimer, also by Durer, which must have been a speaking likeness of the burly jurist of Nuremberg. The books which are adorned with these valuable book-plates were bought by the Earl of Arundel, the famous connoisseur and collector, from whom they descended to Henry Howard, afterwards Duke of Norfolk, who presented them to the newly formed Royal Society on the suggestion of John Evelyn the Diarist. Durer made several book-plates for his friends which are described in Thausing’s valuable life of the artist. One for Lazarus Spengler was designed in 1515, and in the British Museum there is a drawing of the same date which bears the inscription, “Albert Durer did this for Melchoir Pfinzing’s book.” The plate for Hieronymus Ebner, of Nuremberg, also designed by Durer, is dated 1536. Before taking leave of German book-plates we must mention a very curious one of John Faber, Bishop of Vienna, who was called by his admirers the “hammer of heretics” on account of the curious statement which it contains. The Bishop in 1540, the year before he died, bequeathed his books to the College of St. Nicholas in Vienna, and he had a book-plate designed for the purpose, with this inscription (in Latin) upon it:—“This book was bought by us, Dr. John Faber, Bishop of Vienna—and since, indeed, that money (which purchased this volume) did not arise from the revenues and properties of our diocese, but from our own most honest labours in other directions; and therefore it is free to us to give or bequeath the book to whomsoever we please; we accordingly present it to our College of St. Nicholas; and we ordain this volume shall remain forever for the use of the students.” The collecting of book-plates is so far an evil that their labels are often taken out of books where they are of more interest than when collected with others in a scrap book. But it is useless complaining, for the mania has laid hold of a large number of collectors, and a strong illustration of the way in which the taste has spread is to be found in the fact that during the last few weeks a special society of book-plate collectors has been formed.—Daily Chronicle.

DUTCH hand-made paper is chiefly manufactured at Maestricht, Amsterdam, and at Apeldoorn, a mill which produces the fine “verge de Hollande” laid paper and paper for bank notes, loan papers, &c. All sizes are made, but chiefly the superior qualities. This factory employs 150 workmen and produces on an average 2,500 pounds per diem. These papers are well-known throughout the world. The Nederlandsche Papier Fabrick at Maestricht is the largest in the country. Its production is taken largely by England and her dependencies. About 700 hands are employed, and all kinds of papers made from the common wrappers to the finest book papers. The output of “fine writings” is used by the Hollanders themselves. The reputation which the Low Countries have obtained for the best kind of papers extends also to those of a cheaper grade.